

REMARKS/ARGUMENTS

Favorable reconsideration of this application, in view of the present amendments and in light of the following discussion, is respectfully requested.

Claims 17-26 and 28 are pending. In the present amendment, Claims 17, 19-21, 23-26, and 28 are currently amended; Claims 27 and 29-32 are canceled without prejudice or disclaimer; and no claims are added herewith. Support for the present amendments can be found in the original specification, for example at page 4, line 23 to page 5, line 2. Thus, it is respectfully submitted that no new matter is added by this amendment.

In the outstanding Office Action, the drawings were objected to; Claims 17, 18, 24, 26, 27, 31, and 32 were rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 102(b) as anticipated by Bertaccini (U.S. Patent No. 4,147,455); Claims 19, 29, and 30 were rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) as unpatentable over Bertaccini in view of Recalde (U.S. Patent No. 5,533,834); and Claims 20-23, 25, and 28 were rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) as unpatentable over Bertaccini.

With respect to the objection to the drawings, an exemplary embodiment of the “carrying structure” is shown in Fig. 1 as corresponding to the base structure 1 together with the tilting upper surfaces 2. Further, an exemplary embodiment of the “foundations” is shown in Fig. 1 as corresponding to the bearing base of the base structure 1. It is respectfully submitted that no new matter is added. Further, as discussed above, Claims 29 and 32 are canceled. Thus, the drawings objections with respect to those claims are moot. Accordingly, it is respectfully requested that the objection to the drawings be withdrawn.

Turning now to the rejections under 35 U.S.C. § 102(b) and 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) based on Bertaccini and Recalde, Applicants respectfully request reconsideration of these rejections and traverse these rejections, as discussed below.

It is respectfully submitted that the cited references do not disclose or suggest “the tilting creates a lateral force acting on the pipelines, in relation to the weight of the pipelines

and an inclination angle of the upper surfaces, which predetermines a direction of transversal movement of the pipelines on the upper surfaces of the supports,” as recited in amended Claim 17.

In particular, Bertaccini discusses a triangular apparatus 1 which is able to raise a pipeline 2 to a preselected point, with the apparatus 1 at the same time supporting the pipeline 2. The triangular apparatus 1 has a wedge attached to the sloped side 3 of the apparatus, and the pipeline 2 rests on a wedge 10. The wedge 10 only rises along the sloped side 3 such that the wedge 10 cannot slip backwards. The wedge 10 is urged upwards by pulleys 15, 17. Once a subsea vehicle maps the configuration of the pipeline, calculations of stresses determine the location and magnitude of the upwards push to impose on the pipeline, such that the apparatus 1 causes “an optimum preselected geometrical optimal outline” to be taken. In other words, Bertaccini discusses an active system, because it presents an imposed displacement by the apparatus 1.

In contrast, according to the method of Claim 17, lateral buckling is controlled by the claimed supporting systems, which allow the pipeline to move laterally. The displacement of the supports according to the claimed method is an allowed displacement based on physical forces acting on the supports. The displacement is not generated by the support, and thus, the claimed supporting systems are a passive system. Additionally, the pipeline supported by the claimed supports is never transversally blocked, because the pipeline can always move in a lateral direction.

The claimed supporting systems allow the direction of the lateral movement of the pipeline due to buckling to be controlled, thus overcoming any uncontrolled effect associated with defects in the pipeline configurations. Further, the supporting systems reduce the stress variation range in the deformed zone induced by the cyclic loads due to repeated shutdown and start-up operations.

Accordingly, it is respectfully requested that the rejection of Claim 17, and all claims which depend thereon, as anticipated by or unpatentable over Bertaccini, be withdrawn.

Claims 19, 29, and 30 are dependent on Claim 17, and thus are patentable for at least the reasons discussed above with respect to Claim 17. Further, it is respectfully submitted that Recalde does not cure the deficiencies of Bertaccini with respect to Claim 17.

Accordingly, it is respectfully submitted that Claims 19, 29, and 30 patentably define over the cited references.

Consequently, in view of the present amendment, no further issues are believed to be outstanding in the present application, and the present application is believed to be in condition for formal allowance. A Notice of Allowance is earnestly solicited.

Should the Examiner deem that any further action is necessary to place this application in even better form for allowance, the Examiner is encouraged to contact Applicant's undersigned representative at the below listed telephone number.

Respectfully submitted,

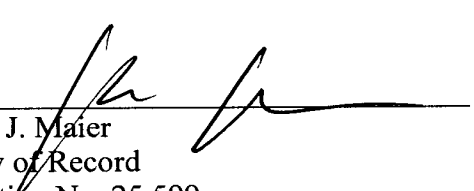
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